
1a. Marginal lamina narrow, mostly erect, with more-or-less isodiametric cells; margins strongly toothed; uppermost cells of lamellae with U-shaped notch visible in section. .................. Polytrichum commune

1b. Marginal lamina wide, membranous, overlapping and sharply inflexed, enclosing the lamellae; margins entire or minutely crenulate; upper-most cells of lamellae not notched. .................. 2

2a. Leaf sheath ovate; blade abruptly reduced to a long, conspicuous white hair point. .................. Polytrichum piliferum

2b. Leaf sheath rectangular to elliptic; blade with short, reddish hair point. .................. 3

3a. Plants fastigiately branched; awns bicolored, reddish brown and roughly toothed at base; marginal cells of lamellae ovoid, more-or-less thin-walled. .................. Polytrichum hyperboreum

3b. Plants simple; awns uniformly brownish throughout (or hyaline only at extreme tip), roughened to subentire; marginal cells of lamellae pyriform in section, thick-walled especially in the apex. .................. 4

4a. Stems without tomentum of whitish rhizoids, brownish tomentose only near base; leaves long, 3–6(8) mm; capsules up to 2 times longer than broad. .................. Polytrichum juniperinum

4b. Stems with tomentum of whitish rhizoids; leaves shorter, 2–5(6) mm; capsules cubic. .................. Polytrichum strictum